VICTOR HUGO.

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF A RHETORICIAN.

THE LETTERS OF VICTOR HUGO TO HIS FAMILY, TO SAINTE-BEUVE AND OTHERS. Edited by Paul Meurice. Octavo, pp. 277. Boston and New-York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

Between the apocalyptic Hugo of Mr. Swinburne's hysterical laudation and the pinchbeck figure which his so-called "realistic" critics have made out of the famous French novelist and poet, there stands an individuality which is harder to grasp than either of the two inventions, because it is more complex, but one to which the sane student is bound to be loyal. This individuality contains some of the great qualities to which the eulogists are constantly referring, some of the petty elements which enrage the opposition. The thing that is really most interesting, and most characteristic, about Victor Hugo is the way in which he combined the great and the little, the way in which to this day he puzzles the reader through his contradictions of himself. Thus we feel that he is not wholly wrong when he writes to Sainte-Beuve as follows: "You have always thought me ruled by my head, whereas I am guided by my heart. To love, and to need love and friendship, apply these two words as you like, is the principle of my existence, whether in joy or grief, before the world or in private, heart-whole or not." To throw this out of court entirely might seem cynical. To say that it was just Hugo's talk might seem unsympathetic. Yet it is impossible to keep these sceptical thoughts at a distance. They are present throughout a study of his works, and in a perusal of his correspondence they follow the reader down every page.

I.

Hugo took himself with papal seriousness during the years of idolatry which the French Nation gave him in his prime. He took himself in much the same way before he had made his mark. One of the early letters in this new volume is addressed to M. Louis Pavie, father of young Victor Pavie, who, at the time of this correspondence, was beginning a literary career with criticism and original work. Hugo writes to thank Pavie père for some kindness received, and then goes on: "You do more; you send me your own works, so matured, so full of wisdom and esprit, and your son's verses, which sparkle with youth and poetic feeling. These latter are your productions too, dear sir, and I believe I shall not offend your natural pride as an author and a father by asserting that, remarkable as are your writings, your son is still the greatest of your works. This, by the way, is what was said of Homer apropos of Virgil. Tell your young eaglet, dear sir, your Victor, that there is another Victor who would envy him—if envy could co-exist with affection—his fine poem on David, 'le Juif, la Mer,' and 'le Lac,' an ingenious and inspired composition, and, above all, his charming elegy of 'l'Enfant.' Tell him especially not to hide his head under his wing; his wings are made to soar aloft, and his eyes to gaze at the sun. If my five-and-twenty years (for I am near that) gave me some right of advising his eighteen, I should advise him"—but on this climax we may pause. Could anything be more pompous, more artificial? It is easy to say that Hugo's immaturity explains it, but as a matter of fact it does nothing of the sort. He wrote that way all his life long. The present volume is full of similar solemnities, and, indeed, the collection threatens to be, for this reason, a dreadful bore. But it is interesting to get at Hugo's personality. Whether for good or bad he is no commonplace subject, and nowhere does he draw his portrait with so much accuracy as in these pages of unconscious rhetoric.

The last phrase points to the secret of his character and indicates, moreover, not only what is cheap, but what is fine in the man. The rhetorical afflatus sometimes has its root in a large, generous turn of mind, in a warmth of ideas, which is not unrelated to warmth of feeling, and there is always a hope in Hugo's reader, always a vague belief that somehow, at the bottom of his soul, the man had an inspiration of grandeur and would have made it heroically manifest if his passion for language had not run away with him. That it did run away with him is undeniable in the face of his novels, and the fact is still more patent to the observer in the presence of the correspondence, but the saving touch comes out in the latter as in the works. Take, in illustration, the passage in which Hugo alludes to Delacroix, in a letter to Baron Taylor. There was a richness of tone and a breadth of feeling to the man who could, in 1829, a year almost as significant as the one which followed, write a thing like this: "Talking of great painters, do not believe, with a few stupid newspapers, in the front rank of which I unhesitatingly place 'The Globe,' that Delacroix is not up to the mark. His 'Sardanapalus' is a splendid thing, and so grand that it cannot be grasped by small minds." There you have the sympathetic and intelligent nature, speaking out at a time when intelligence and understanding seemed dead. But immediately follows the revealing trait which carries us back to the lesser Hugo: "I only regret one thing, and that is, that he did not represent the funeral-pile as on fire; this fine scene would have been still finer had the foreground been a mass of flames." Is not this plea pure Hugo, the very sign manual of his taste for piling Pelion upon Ossa?

Part of this excess in Victor Hugo sprang from his innermost nature, part of it was due to the rôle which fell to him on the threshold of his career. The story of "Hernani" need not be retold in this place. Everyone recalls at the mere mention of the drama all that it meant to the France of the thirties, and especially to the young writers of Paris. Gautier's red waistcoat is one of the most familiar things in the history of the theatre. But these letters of Hugo's give a renewed sense of his own connection with the great romantic campaign. Many of them were written in the thick of his first theatrical exploits, and they revive perfectly the atmosphere in which he lived. It is, perhaps, not to be wondered at that he took himself seriously. He was in the eye of Paris. He found himself the standard-bearer of a new literature. His tactics imply what the condition of things must have been. When he writes to the Minister of the Interior protesting against the decision of the censorship against "Marion de Lorme," and begging for fairer treatment of "Hernani," he explains frankly the light in which he regards his official critics: "The dramatic censors," he says, "are all taken from the literary party opposed to us, which is a compliment to the party that claims full liberty in artistic matters, to which I am proud to belong (not that I wish to saddle the whole of the old school with the faults of some of its members, but it is a fact I point out by the way). Now, these censors, mostly dramatic authors themselves, all of them interested champions of the old literary as well as of the old political régime, are my opponents, and, if need be, my natural enemies." Natural enemies! That hits the nail on the head. Hugo's literary antagonists were his personal foes, and when this is said, not Hugo's feeling alone is touched upon, but the general feeling which made him, which put him in his place and kept him there, which proves, as has been said above, that he owed part of his pontifical manner and his excess in matters of taste to the elevation upon which the public movement of the time placed him. He was a young man when he threw down the gauntlet of romance against the classicists, and since "Hernani" was made the rallying cry of his faction it is no wonder that his head was turned, that he looked upon himself as a very important person, who, as an individual, was waging a battle against individuals. It was not in his nature to merge himself in romanticism. He preferred to regard romanticism as merged in himself. This it is which gives him, to some extent, at least, the air which has been pointed out in the letter to M. Louis Pavie; this it is which sets the tone of the appeal which he sends to Paul Lacroix, begging him to join a body of "claqueurs" at one of the performances of "Hernani": "We must not rest on our laurels. The enemy is on the alert. The third performance must discourage them, if possible. Therefore, in the name of our cherished freedom, summon the whole clan of brave and faithful friends for Monday. I look to you to help me in pulling out this last tooth of the old classic Pegasus. To the rescue, and advance! . . . Tell your good brother that I count on him for Monday, although 'Hernani' must bore him terribly. The great cause is at stake, and not myself personally."

The concluding sentence of this letter, it may be observed, is hardly exact. Hugo could exhibit a certain sort of modesty, but in the long run it was "moi-meme" quite as much as "the cause," for which he fought. Within a fortnight of the letter to Paul Lacroix he wrote another to Armand Carrel, in which he alludes to his proscription by the Academy in a vein of delightful complacency, and he takes pains to tell his correspondent that his life has been one of solitude, of conscientious devotion to art. "In an age when everything is done by salons and newspapers," he declares, "I began and continued my career without a single salon or newspaper." Yet the epistle to Lacroix, apropos of the classic opposition to "Hernani," shows that he was not above fighting the enemy with its own weapon, i. e., personal influence, and there is more than one letter in this collection which points to the asking of favors or the anticipation of favors to come. The ring of the letter written to King Joseph in 1831 is not altogether free from the harsh tang of self-interest. "Permit me, then, sire, to offer Your Majesty, as a personal compliment, a copy of my last work. . . . I hope you will read it with indulgence. You will see in it, as in all my other works, the name of the Emperor. I always allude to him, because he is always in my mind. If Your Majesty has honored me by reading what I have hitherto written, you will have noticed that in each of my works my admiration for your illustrious brother has grown deeper and deeper, more and more heartfelt, more and more free from the royalist alloy of my early days. Count on me, sire; the little I can I will do for the heir of the greatest name in the world. I think he can save France. I will say it, I will write it, and, please God, I will print it."

That sounds very loyal, and possibly fell upon the Bonaparte ear with no suggestion of aught but fidelity. Certainly Hugo showed, on the whole, that he had a patriotic heart. His record through the maze of the politics of his time is clear enough, even if his crown of exile is ignored. Yet, in a way difficult to define, his words fail to carry conviction, and the explanation would seem to be that he uttered too many of them, that he laid on his colors a little too lavishly. Writing to Mlle. Louise Bertin, who was composing the music for an opera founded on "Notre Dame de Paris," he says: "I know of a good and happy family for which I have a heartfelt affection, and that is yours." So far, so good. But when he continues and observes: "I would give the rest of the world for Les Roches, and the rest of the people in it for your family," the reader knows that the line between truth and hyperbole has been passed. It is plausible to say that it is only the line between matter-of-fact prose and graceful gallantry; but the style is too characteristic of Hugo; one gets sick of his sugared compliments, so sick of them that all his fair words begin to seem false. Occasionally the note is true and dignified. Read the brief letter in which Hugo tells Mérimée that he exonerates him from all complicity in the suspension of "Le Roi s'Amuse." The diction there is simple and manly. But turn from this exceptional fragment to the correspondence bearing upon what would seem to have been a misunderstanding between himself and Sainte-Beuve, that involved Mme. Hugo. The ardent periods suggest a maudlin sentimentalist, and it is amusing to think of what Sainte-Beuve himself must have thought of them, Sainte-Beuve, with his serenity and his unerring sense of measure.

Victor Hugo never had a sense of measure. He could advise Victor Pavie on questions of rhythm and stand out for "an internal regularity in the arrangement of the metre," but, curiously, he had no such internal poise himself. This applies to his poetry, in spite of the Swinburnian tradition; it applies to his novels, which are among the most amorphous things in fiction; and it applies to the whole life and character of their author. He was a sentimentalist all his life; how much of one the reader may judge from the following passage, if from no other, in this correspondence. It is enough to silence the Hugolaters themselves: "I went to see Chambord yesterday. You cannot imagine how singularly beautiful it is. Every enchantment, every kind of poetry, every folly, even, is represented in the admirable quaintness of this palace of knights and fairies. I cut my name on the top of the highest tower; I took away a little stone and moss from it, and a piece of the framework of the window on which Francis I wrote the two lines:

"'Souvent femme varie,
Bien fol qui s'y fie!'

I value these two relics highly."

II.

No doubt the "relics" were treasures to possess; but what a flood of light the confessed vandalism lets in upon the last instincts of the man. It is inconceivable that any one of absolutely puissant and refined genius could have done such a thing. It is the deed of a man with a tinge of vulgarity in his soul, a tinge of intellectual dishonesty. Hugo deceived himself as to his gifts. After that it was not so difficult as it might seem to deceive the French people, which, for all its sagacity, is terribly prone to take a man at his own valuation. Hugo set his value high, and his has been one of the splendid reputations of his country. There is no likelihood of its waning, either, because it has been based upon good qualities, as well as upon others of merely specious character. But it is impossible to feel that his was a flawless inspiration, that his was a nature genuine through and through. He recalls the poseur too often. He writes to one friend: "The theatre is a kind of temple, humanity is a sort of religion. Meditate on this, Pavie; it is a piece of great impiety or great piety; I believe I am accomplishing a mission." There is nobility in the lines. But when in another letter to the same correspondent he describes the kind of theatre he would like to manage himself, it turns out that it would be a private luxury, far removed from "humanity." "I shall only write the plays," he says, "and, once the machine is started, shall perhaps go off and write them on the Lake of Como, or on the banks of the Rhine, or in your house." It is a charming idea, but where does humanity come in? "Through the gates of my imagination," Hugo promptly responds, and there we get the justification of his renown.

He never felt the cry of humanity in his very soul, as Balzac, for example, felt it. He never touched life as the younger Dumas touched it. He never meant, we believe, with half as much intensity as he should have meant them, since he used them at all, the protestations of love and affection by which his correspondence is rendered positively saccharine. But in the world of imagination he moved with supreme assurance. Call him sentimental, as he undoubtedly was, to the point of sickliness. Call him artificial, conceited, colossally conceited. He cannot escape the charge. But say that he is one of the great imaginations of French literature, and you have done him the baldest justice. "Les Miserables" is damp with the moisture of artificial tears. "Quatre-Vingt-Treize" is melodrama of the most unblushing description, but both books have an immense fund of creative fire behind them. With them, as with the poems and the other novels, there is a richness of color, a fulness of atmosphere, a blaze and fury of rhetoric, half-wordy and half-emotional, to which the coldest critic in the world would have to yield homage. It is because he has these gifts that Hugo stands, as has been said, midway between the two extremes of criticism. He is too rhetorical really to deserve Swinburne's panegyrics. His rhetoric has too much real enthusiasm and too much originality for him to sink so far as his detractors would have him sink. The obvious judgment would seem to be that he combined, as has been said, the great with the little, the greatness of a superb worker in words with the littleness of a limited spiritual force. His letters confirm the hypothesis to a dot.

We speak, it should be added, with reference to the volume before us alone. It is the first of two, and the second, which will be brought out in a short time, in similarly handsome form, might do something to modify the impression made by the letters now offered to the public. Yet this seems unlikely, especially since M. Paul Meurice has shown himself so tactless an editor already that only an overwhelming mass of first-rate material could save him from disclosing his hero in as sorry a plight as he now is made to experience. It is doubtful, too, if even a raising of the quality of Hugo's letters in the next volume would do much good. The cat has been let out of the bag through the reckless manner in which M. Meurice has printed every scrap of writing upon which he could lay his hands. Hugo cannot stand this, as we have shown. Possibly, if he had been edited with discrimination, and the cream of two volumes had been compressed into one, our opinion of him might have been changed. On the other hand, we would have been deceived. The truth is what is wanted, and to have all of Hugo's trivial letters, as well as his manliest communications, is to be able to walk around him, as it were, and to study him at full length. So studied, it must be confessed that he leaves the reader sadly dissatisfied; so much so, in fact, that in looking back over the correspondence one feels no gratitude as one feels in recalling the letters of Thackeray or Fitzgerald or Lowell. These men stand for things tenderly humane and sympathetic; they add to our knowledge of human nature. Hugo adds nothing to our general fund of feeling and understanding; he increases solely our knowledge of himself. Since he is an important author, one is glad of that increase, simply as a matter of information; but since it means also a disillusionment, the letters are less welcome. We would rather have cherished a little more confidence in him and are sorry to see it taken away. The novels leave us in possession of the belief that Hugo was a great romanticist. The letters suggest that he was a cold-blooded actor in whom cheap sentiment took the place of strong and permanent feeling. If the reader doubts this let him examine the letters touching upon the birth and death of his first child and the few months of life granted to the infant. Never did the expression of paternal affection sound so thin. These letters show unmistakably in embryo the author of "L'Art d'Etre Grandpère," that is to say, the author of a contradiction in terms. Imagine an artful grandfather! It is like a manufactured poet. Such a man is Hugo in all the social relations of life. He veneered them over with the spirit of artifice.

MR. ALDRICH'S NEW POEM.

A STORY FROM THE APOCHRYPHA IN BLANK VERSE.

JUDITH AND HOLOFERNES. A Poem. By Thomas Bailey Aldrich. Octavo, pp. 91, 78. Boston and New-York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

To begin with, Mr. Aldrich put his finger upon one of the finest motives in literature when he chose the heroic Judith of the Apochrypha for his theme. In his preface he names her with Charlotte Corday; and though the Muse of History might resent the juxtaposition of the two women, it is clear to any merely sympathetic mind that, courage for courage, the modern heroine and the legendary rival one another across the ages. Both, moreover, appeal to the imagination with the same nobility. In both a womanly tenderness survives over and above the stern beauty of that avenging fate which they personified. Modern criticism timidly lifts its head from time to time and says that Charlotte Corday was an assassin, that Marat was a victim, not a just sacrifice. Only the other day a very reasonable and persuasive attempt was made to whiten his memory. No doubt if there were any documents accessible, we would have some one holding a brief for Holofernes and pouring scorn upon his executioner. But the force of a tremendous deed carries far, especially when the instinct of man leads him to admire it, and it is unlikely that anything will ever be said which could rob Judith of the smallest portion of her fame. She continues and will continue to thrill the reader of her story. Why? Because she was extremely beautiful, and beauty is in itself an appeal to what is reverent and generous in man. Further, the deed she did has not only the grandeur of a dim epical time about it, but touches the most modern temperament with a sense of its audacity and might. Judith struck a blow that was needed in a very human crisis. We may put the whole drama far back into a sphere wherein Israel struggled like a phantom race in a world clouded by divine punishments, illuminated by divine inspirations; but at the core of this legend there is a poignancy of human anguish and human victory which makes it every inch as tangible as Charlotte Corday's act or the Battle of Waterloo. We feel that the men, the women, the children of Israel, people like ourselves, needed the death of Holofernes and the consequent destruction of the Assyrian army. We feel all the difficulties that lay before Judith in the achievement of that death, and we realize the subtlest emotion of her contemporaries that was aroused by her triumph.

These things are realized, we say, considering just the outlines of the story which we get from the Apochrypha. Without Mr. Aldrich's aid we can grasp the character of Judith. The question is, then, has he intensified our sympathy, filled out our portrait of her and our picture of the scenes in which she moved? Regretfully, these questions must be answered in the negative. "Judith and Holofernes" is a mature piece of work, and the very authority and finish of Mr. Aldrich's art give it a dignity which commands respect. But respect is not the tribute which the reader stands ready to pay to a metrical version of a passionately romantic tale. The lyrical narration of Judith's exploit ought to make the pulse beat faster, ought to stir the emotions like a trumpet call, and true blank verse has always a lyrical fire in it, it moves swiftly, melodiously, masterfully. Mr. Aldrich's verse is suavely phrased, yet it has no more movement, no more passion than if he were celebrating the development of a mathematical problem. Once, and only once, the sluggish gait is quickened. It is in within half a dozen pages of the conclusion. Judith has smitten Holofernes in his tent, and her flight with Marah, the hand-maiden, immediately after, spurs Mr. Aldrich very nearly to nervous, impulsive utterance:

A loud gong struck twelve
And the two women past the silent guard;
With measured footsteps past, as if to prayer.
But on the camp's lone edge fear gave them wing,
And glancing not behind, they fled like wraiths
Through the hushed night into the solemn woods,
Where, from gnarled roots and palsied trees, black shapes
Rose up, and seemed to follow them; and once
Some creature startled in the underbrush
Made cry, and froze the blood about their hearts.
Across the plain, with backward-streaming hair
And death-white face, they fled, until at last,
They reached the rocky steep upon whose crest
The gray walls loomed through vapor. This they climb,
Wild with the pregnant horrors of the night,
And flung themselves against the city gates.

So far as this goes it is spirited; and besides being pictorial, as Mr. Aldrich's best verse always is, it undoubtedly wakes a sense of Judith's terrified sensations, imperious now that the head of the besieging commander is in Marah's napkin and the tension of her sojourn in the Assyrian camp is relaxed. At the same time it is hardly pleasant to have to admit that a passage like this represents the poet's high-water mark in the present instance. He did better in "Wyndham Towers," and that production is more clever than poetical. The melancholy truth seems to be that Mr. Aldrich was never intended to be a dramatic poet. His enthusiasm will sometimes carry him through a brief episode of dramatic significance; but he needs the lyrical form, as well as the lyrical impulse, to take him even a short distance across a field marked by stirring deeds and situations. To any one unfamiliar with his work as a writer of songs this volume might seem to deny him, moreover, so much as a lyrist's wreath. He introduces a song for Judith, in the third book, with the declaration that

Like a mist
The music drifted from the silvery strings.

This is too high praise. The stanzas that follow, beginning, "The small green grapes in heavy clusters grew," contain no music at all. But this must not be taken as an illustration of Mr. Aldrich in his lyric moments. He has been melodious too many times for this one failure to be reckoned against him.

The failure of "Judith and Holofernes" as a whole is not to be regarded with so much urbanity. There is something suspicious in its flaccidity. The tepid narrative provokes a surmise that Mr. Aldrich, with all his imagination, is nevertheless unable to see the full glory of his theme. That is a forlorn thought to have, about a poet. It may be fairer, however, to dismiss it in favor of the explanation offered above, that Mr. Aldich is out of his element in this work, and therefore not entirely to blame. It is the easier to accept this interpretation of his impotence as the singer of Judith's fame, inasmuch as he has imbedded in this book several passages which recall his descriptive art in its most attractive phase. He does nothing to make his drama dramatic, but he provides a beautiful picture when he tells of Judith in her tower and of her angelic visitant. If Mr. Aldrich could reproduce passions, emotions, as well as he reproduces appearances in this fragment, he might make a masterpiece of his "Judith and Holofernes," supposing he were to rewrite it some day. Only it is to be hoped that he will attempt nothing of the sort.

LITERARY NOTES.

Mrs. Rebecca Harding Davis writes so little nowadays that the younger generation may be excused for forgetting that the mother of the author of "Princess Aline" is a novelist herself. Her gloomy story, "Life in the Iron Mills," is a much stronger piece of work than Mrs. Burnett's "Lass o' Lowrie," but the former has gone into the limbo of things neglected, while the latter has won its way into new editions. Both stories, it must be admitted, are somewhat hysterical in tone.

Mrs. Davis has lately written a new novel which the Harpers are bringing out under the title of "Frances Waldeaux." There is a good deal of intensity in the story, in which a mother who has spent years of slavish devotion upon her only son sees him beguiled into marriage by an adventuress.

"Clarissa Furiosa," W. E. Norris's new novel, has for its heroine a fair woman who in anger at her husband leaves him and finds interest and occupation in various reformatory fads of the period. Her life without her lord is, as Mr. Norris points out, far from pleasant, some of its irritating incidents being described with much humor and agreeable cynicism. The author evidently doesn't approve of the New Woman.

Mr. Whistler is to bring out a new edition of "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies." It will be no mere reprint of the first and now famous publication, but a considerably enlarged collection of his inimitable witticisms. The book has been criticised, of course, and especially by those whose scalps the author so gleefully has captured, but the cries of those who have felt the sting of the "Butterfly" will never diminish the effect of his incursions among "the serious ones of this earth."

The book is one of the wittiest of the century, and that its wit is genuine is proved by the fact that it is as fresh now as when it was first brought to light. Take the retort upon "Oscar," when he had followed a bright saying of Whistler's with the observation that he wished he could call it his own. "You will, my boy, you will," replied the painter, and there is a laugh in this yet. The retort in the matter of "Balaam's ass" is entrancing. Whistler had compared some one to "the first great critic, who had opened his mouth to Balaam." Then comes a third person and points out that "the ass was right." Re-enter Whistler with the reminder that "it is the only case on record," and "the age of miracles is past." The new edition of "The Gentle Art" will be a boon.

Before the end of this month, or, at the latest, in November, the first of Mr. Henley's twelve volumes of Byron will be published. It is good to see that it will appear at a reasonable price, and is not to be launched solely in one of those exasperating editions which "connoisseurs" alone may possess. They will be provided with a six-guinea edition, of course, and much may it profit them, but the public is to be blessed with a set of convenient and well-made octavos at less than $2 each. This is the more to be approved since it is unquestionably true, as Mr. Henley declares, that the time is ripe for the poet's revival. Byron's sharp wit and brisk dialectics will supply a corrective to much of the feebleness that is afflicting contemporary literature. He was always a tonic, even in the days when simple-

BYRON AT THE AGE OF SEVENTEEN.

tons aped his shirt collars, and made believe they had passions. There will naturally be some of the same rubbish talked when Mr. Henley's new edition, the first of any consequence to be printed in years, has begun to have its effect. A Byron revival in London, while the minor poet and the minor proser are running about, is inconceivable without a certain amount of nonsense in its train. But there is a wide audience of the most serious character waiting for Byron, and the poems and letters, the diaries and speeches, will be awaited with the deepest interest. They are familiar now, yet they will take a new lease of life under Mr. Henley's sagacious editorship.

The subscription to Rudyard Kipling's new book of ballads, "The Seven Seas," is said to have already reached 20,000 copies in England. Mr. Kipling is one of the few modern authors who have won both fortune and fame—fame, not notoriety.

Mr. Howells has been busy of late, and the Harper publications are to profit by his industry. His novelette, "A Pair of Patient Lovers," is to appear in the "Magazine," while his novel, "Ragged Lady," will run through the "Bazar" in the latter half of '95. His personal recollections of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes are to be published in the December number of the magazine.

There is said to be new biographical matter about Charles and Mary Lamb, as well as hitherto unpublished letters from the brother and sister, in a book which W. C. Hazlitt has sent to the press. The volume is to be entitled "The Lambs: Their Lives, Their Friends and Their Correspondents."

The literary journals of London have, in most cases, declined to print illustrations, but one of the oldest of them, "The Academy," has at last concluded to adopt the practice of printing small cuts here and there in its text. The paper passes next month to a new proprietor, and Mr. Cotton, the present Editor will be succeeded by Mr. Lewis Hind. The latter has been Editor of "The Pall Mall Budget," and it is believed that he will introduce some of the features of that publication into "The Academy."

William Morris will be the subject of a sumptuous volume to be published this season. It will be an elaborate survey of his work as "an industrial and decorative artist, preserver (as distinguished from 'restorer') of ancient monuments, and general worker in the aesthetic movement of the day." The book has been written by Mr. Aymer Vallance, a well-known disciple of Morris, and will be abundantly illustrated, some of the plates being facsimiles of drawings by the artist himself. A complete bibliography, including the works printed at the Kelmscott Press, will be given in the volume.

SANDRO BOTTICELLI.

SOME UNFAMILIAR SPECIMENS OF HIS ART.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS TO DANTE—A BOOK OF REPRODUCTIONS FROM THE RARE DRAWINGS IN THE BERLIN MUSEUM AND THE VATICAN—SOME NOTES ON A FLORENTINE PAINTER WHO WAS ALSO A POET.

Of all the artists of the Italian Renaissance the one who has most frequently occupied the attention of the critics has been Sandro Botticelli. Less typical of his time in some respects than several of his contemporaries or immediate followers, he is, nevertheless, an incessantly recurring figure in the history of Southern painting, of Southern imagination. He possessed, indeed, one of the most imaginative minds of the fifteenth century, and, perhaps, one reason why he has been studied with so much enthusiasm is that he, more than most artists of his day, stands for the poetic inspiration which was the most important in Renaissance culture. It is a curious fact that for all his significance to amateurs and critics of art, he should have remained comparatively unknown until now in one of his most remarkable works, the set of illustrations drawn for Dante's "Divina Commedia." Those drawings have been known to specialists. Waagen discovered them in the collection of the Duke of Hamilton, at Hamilton Palace, and since 1882, when they passed from that collection to the Royal Museum of Berlin, they have been more widely known. About the time of the Berlin purchase, too, there were found in the library of the Vatican at Rome eight drawings which obviously belonged to the same series. These

also, which were bought by Pope Alexander VIII from the library of Queen Christina of Sweden on her death at Rome in 1689, have not been altogether hidden from view. But it has remained for the enlightened enterprise of he present day to give the entire set of pictures a really extensive circulation.

They lie before us in one of the noblest volumes which the typographical and reproductive arts have given to the world in a long time. It is published in this country by Messrs. Dodd, Mead & Co. They bring it forth in an edition limited to 500 copies for England and America, which edition was printed in quarto form at the Imperial Press in Berlin. The title page runs as follows: "Drawings by Sandro Botticelli for Dante's 'Divina Commedia.' Reduced Fac-Similes after the Originals in the Royal Museum, Berlin, and in the Vatican Library. With an Introduction and Commentary by F. Lippmann." According to the commentator of this volume "the sheets on which the drawings are made are of fine goatskin parchment, averaging 12½ inches high by 18½ inches wide. On the smooth, or so-called 'fleshy side,' are the drawings, on the rough or 'hairy side' of each sheet a canto of the poem, divided into six columns, and written in a character known in Italy as 'Alla Antica.' The original arrangement of the sheets was such that the text to each illustration faced it, so that the reader, on opening the book, had both drawing and poem before him. . . . All the drawings are sketched in with a soft silver-point, probably composed of an alloy of silver and lead, and finished with the pen in black or brown ink; the lightly touched outlines are shaded here and there where modelling is to be suggested." These lines, with our fac-simile of the drawing to accompany the fifth canto of the "Paradiso," will give the reader a clear idea of the facts of this work of Botticelli's. Herr Lippmann discreetly ascribes the Dante illustrations to a period, say from 1480 to 1490, when Botticelli was attracted by the sermons of Savonarola, and drifted into a vein of pensive ratiocination highly favorable to the elaboration of Dantesque subtleties. He was born in 1446, and died in 1510, so it will be seen that the Dante drawings belong to the evening of his career. In that contemplative twilight let those follow him who will with questions as to the meaning of this drawing or that. Difficulties will attend their quest, but Herr Lippmann is as lucid as he is erudite. For every illustration he provides an explanation that is in the main sufficient. His note on the drawing which we reproduce, for example, is brief but adequate. It represents, he says, Dante gazing upon Beatrice and dazzled by the supernatural brightness of her face. She answers in the negative Dante's inquiry as to whether man can make atonement for broken vows by other service. From the commentary in this book, however, it is tempting to turn without delay to the drawings themselves.

Merely as illustrations of Botticelli's style, merely as so many practically new records of his artistic felicity, these drawings will rank at once among the most precious documents brought by the printing press within the reach of the student. In their linear simplicity they seem to preserve the very essence of the man's charm, his quaint originality, his grace, his infinite delicacy. No one ever conveyed so much in a mere sweep of the point. Draperies with Botticelli become something more than mere coverings for the human form. They are flung, indeed, over forms more divine than human, and their diaphanous flutter seems to be due to breezes blowing from realms undiscovered before him. His genius was fragile in quality. He lived the life of a typical busy Florentine, managing a great studio in which his pupils carried out designs for him as though in an every-day workshop, but the soul of this painter escaped the contamination of every-day things. When he painted the nude, as in his famous "Venus" of the Uffizi, he exhibited a purity of feeling as unmistakable as that which distinguishes his numerous panels of the Madonna. He was a pagan in both cases; he painted religious and mythological themes out of the same inspiration, but since this inspiration made for beauty in its most refined estate, there is never anything anomalous about his treatment of either sacred or profane material. He sought in both the glamour that his dreamy temperament demanded. He has been called a melancholy man, chiefly because the heads of his women are nearly always drooping under what seems to be a burden of unutterable sorrow; yet his paganism was of that fine, joyous sort which excludes all morbidity from a work of art. No matter how sorrowful his faces may be, the pictures in which they appear are at bottom free from sorrow. They were painted out of a longing for delight, out of an enthusiasm for loveliness. The grief which strikes the modern eye in so profoundly touching a way in the "tondi" of the Uffizi, those circular paintings in which the Madonna is splendidly enthroned, is a grief which never disfigures. There is nothing heart-wrenching about it. It is rather the soft melancholy which one feels in the loneliness of a beautiful moonlit night, among the mountains or by the sea. Out of the dark, glimmering hours there comes an emotion which for all its sadness is a source of deep spiritual refreshment. Closely analyzed, it would probably be identified as the intense appreciation of beauty, an appreciation so passionate as to border upon tears. Botticelli's sadness is of much the same sort; it suggests the weariness of a genius overwhelmed by its closeness to the very arcanum of spiritualized sensuous beauty. The mystical figures of the "Venus," of the equally famous "Primavera," of the "Giuditta é Oloferne," of the masterpieces which exist in Italian galleries outside of Florence, in the Louvre, in the National Gallery, in Russia and in Germany, tremble on the brink of a world in which corporeal forms are refined to elements in harmony with supernatural airs.

In the illustrations to Dante there is revealed a side of Botticelli's art which is not often sufficiently studied by those who have confined their investigations to his paintings alone. In those he has more than once caused modern criticism to wince under defects of mere draughtsmanship, mere science, of which it seems incredible that so great a master could have been guilty. But the technical mastery which comes out so royally in the portraits by Botticelli, and in such draughtsmanship as he gives us in his "Venus," is shown at its very best in the Dante drawings. In them all the artist's hand would seem to have traced with unfailing accuracy and elasticity the promptings of his fecund imagination. In the drawing for the twenty-seventh canto of the "Paradiso," wherein Dante and Beatrice are surrounded by circling ranks of angelic figures, the myriad lines of the composition are held together in a unity not only compact, but exquisitely graceful. Grace! That is the quality without which Botticelli could not have breathed his enchanting dreams upon parchment or upon wood. A design sprang into being under his art in this degree or that of complexity, of simplicity; but whether he dealt with one figure or twenty, the work always preserved a delicate poise, a symmetry of line, which makes him to-day one of the first of exemplars in all that pertains to reposeful and wise composition. Some owlish critics would have it that in this organic balance of his Botticelli anticipated the decorative painters of modern art, the men who propose that a canvas shall be deftly "filled," its constituents fused into a "pattern" of so much line or color. It is a pretty fancy, but it will hardly bear scrutiny outside of the esoteric circles in which "art" consists of a high-flown jargon and an adoration of Mr. Whistler. That distinguished painter having always made his composition a decorative unit as well as a totality of intellectual interpretation, there have been scores and scores of young painters to assert that he stopped at the decorative scheme. The same sort of painter, the same sort of critic, imagines that Botticelli stopped at the same boundary. But he really went far beyond it.

This is the point that perhaps needs to be most emphatically enforced upon the student of the present time. When he is told to go to Botticelli for instruction in the handling of draperies, he wants to recognize also that his time will be wasted if he studies the draperies alone. His old Florentine master is above all things a teacher of imaginative art; he is above all things an idealistic inspiration. The Dante illustrations will prove an invaluable boon if this truth is firmly grasped. Studied reverently, taken as the work of a sensitive thinker as well as a consummate craftsman, they will fertilize a sympathetic mind far more than all the teachings of the schools. It was no "art for art's sake" dilettante who left this legacy to the world, no matter what may be said about his fastidious trifling with the courtly topics of the Medicean era. It was not trifling for him, any more than it was for his princely supporters. Much amateurishness there was, beyond question, in the epicurean circles of the Florentine Renaissance, and the sifter of that feverish period must forever be on the alert to separate what was artificial from what was spontaneous and genuine in the productions of painter, poet and prose writer. But with Botticelli there need be little vigilance. He at least was sincere to the core. If it is said that he could not believe at once in his mythology and his Roman church, the answer, though paradoxical, is just—he did believe in both. That was the peculiar privilege of some of the finest spirits of the Renaissance. They were not good Christians, if you like. They were not genuine pagans. But in some delightful fashion not wholly comprehensible to the nineteenth century, they could move amid classical or churchly scenes with an equal conviction as to their reality. What they created in art or in literature out of the inspiration which they got from both springs, they created with such enthusiasm and with such power that their work stands as immovable before their posterity as it stood before themselves. When Botticelli sent his pagan "Venus" from his studio, when he finished his picture of the "Spring," when he had completed one of his Madonnas, it is impossible to imagine him as differentiating one of these works from the other, saying, "This one is serious, this one is a fancy." For each painting his farewell must have been the same, "Go, thou vision of eternal beauty, I care not whence thou comest. I have seen thee and believe in thee; that is enough."